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The Politics of Religious Moderation from the Perspective of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*: A Socio-Legal Study of Pesantren in Kediri, Indonesia

Miftakhul Huda^{1*}, Nasrulloh², Khoirul Anam³

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia. Email: 230204310005@student.uin-malang.ac.id

²Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia. Email: nasrulloh@syariah.uin-malang.ac.id

³Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia. Email: anam@syariah.uin-malang.ac.id

*Corresponding Author

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Abstract

Religious moderation has become a strategic agenda in Indonesia and has been institutionalized through various legal and educational policies. Existing studies predominantly examine religious moderation from pedagogical, sociological, and policy perspectives, whereas its governance dimension remains underexplored, particularly within the framework of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*. This study investigates how Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) operationalize religious moderation as a form of Islamic public governance and proposes a *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*-based model of moderation governance. Employing a socio-legal approach and qualitative empirical methods, the study was conducted at three pesantren in Kediri, Indonesia: Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo, Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Sumbersari, and Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo Al-Munadhdhoroh. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving *kiai*, teachers, students, and policymakers and were analyzed thematically through the lens of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*. The findings reveal three interconnected models of religious moderation governance: tradition-based governance rooted in classical Islamic scholarship, community-engagement governance promoting social solidarity and interreligious coexistence, and adaptive governance addressing digital-era challenges. These models demonstrate that religious moderation in pesantren extends beyond the implementation of state policies and functions as a collaborative governance mechanism integrating religious authority, public participation, and welfare-oriented objectives. This study contributes to the literature by proposing a conceptual model that bridges state regulations, pesantren institutions, and Islamic principles of public welfare, thereby enriching contemporary debates on Islamic governance, religious moderation, and comparative Islamic legal studies.

Keywords: *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*; Islamic Legal Politics; Religious Moderation; Pesantren; Socio-Legal Studies.



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source are properly credited.

Abstract

Moderasi beragama telah menjadi agenda strategis di Indonesia dan dilembagakan melalui berbagai kebijakan hukum dan pendidikan. Kajian-kajian yang ada umumnya menelaah moderasi beragama dari perspektif pedagogis, sosiologis, dan kebijakan, sementara dimensi tata kelolanya masih relatif kurang mendapat perhatian, khususnya dalam kerangka *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana pesantren mengoperasionalkan moderasi beragama sebagai bentuk tata kelola publik Islam serta menawarkan model tata kelola moderasi beragama berbasis *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan sosio-legal dan metode empiris kualitatif, penelitian dilakukan pada tiga pesantren di Kediri, Indonesia, yaitu Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo, Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Sumbersari, dan Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo Al-Munadhdhoroh. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan kiai, guru, santri, serta pembuat kebijakan, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik melalui perspektif *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*. Temuan penelitian mengungkap tiga model tata kelola moderasi beragama yang saling berkaitan, yaitu tata kelola berbasis tradisi yang berakar pada khazanah keilmuan Islam klasik, tata kelola berbasis keterlibatan komunitas yang mendorong solidaritas sosial dan koeksistensi antarumat beragama, serta tata kelola adaptif yang merespons tantangan era digital. Model-model tersebut menunjukkan bahwa moderasi beragama di pesantren tidak hanya merupakan implementasi kebijakan negara, tetapi juga berfungsi sebagai mekanisme tata kelola kolaboratif yang mengintegrasikan otoritas keagamaan, partisipasi publik, dan tujuan-tujuan kesejahteraan masyarakat. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan literatur dengan menawarkan model konseptual yang menjembatani regulasi negara, institusi pesantren, dan prinsip-prinsip kemaslahatan dalam Islam, sehingga memperkaya perdebatan kontemporer mengenai tata kelola Islam, moderasi beragama, dan studi perbandingan hukum Islam.

Keywords: *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*; Politik Hukum Islam; Moderasi Beragama; Pesantren; Socio-Legal.

Introduction

Religious moderation has become a central issue in contemporary Islamic studies, particularly within multicultural Muslim societies facing the challenges of religious extremism, intolerance, political polarization, and digital religious contestation. In many Muslim-majority countries, religious moderation is increasingly viewed as a strategic framework for maintaining social cohesion, strengthening national stability, and preventing radicalization. Adel et al. (2024) demonstrate that moderation discourse in Afghanistan emerged as an important mechanism for reducing religious extremism and maintaining socio-political stability. Similarly, contemporary scholarship highlights the growing importance of moderation in addressing tensions between religious diversity, citizenship, and governance within modern nation-states.

In Indonesia, religious moderation (*moderasi beragama*) has been institutionalized as a national agenda through various legal and policy instruments (Junaidi et al., 2025). These include the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning *Pesantren*, and Presidential Regulation Number 58 of 2023 concerning the Strengthening of Religious Moderation (Hartono & Hamdi, 2026). Religious moderation is therefore understood not

only as a theological discourse but also as a socio-political and legal framework designed to maintain social harmony, strengthen national integration, and prevent religious extremism within a pluralistic society (Arif, 2021; Fauzan, 2023; Muhlisin et al., 2023).

Within Islamic intellectual traditions, the discourse of moderation is closely associated with the concept of *wasatīyyah*, which emphasizes justice, balance, tolerance, and inclusivity (Hefni et al., 2025; Purwanto et al., 2023; Ubaidillah & Faiz, 2025). Previous studies indicate that *wasatīyyah* has become an important paradigm for strengthening moderate Islamic thought and promoting peaceful coexistence in contemporary Muslim societies (Mala & Hunaida, 2023; Muqowim et al., 2022). Hamzah (2022) further argues that the Medina Charter represents an early model of pluralistic governance and social coexistence within Islamic civilization. Likewise, recent studies demonstrate that *wasatīyyah* serves not only as a theological principle but also as a framework for mitigating Islamophobia, promoting social cohesion, and strengthening contemporary Islamic legal thought in Indonesia (Aziz et al., 2026; Supani et al., 2026; Thohir et al., 2026).

However, discussions of religious moderation have largely been dominated by educational (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024), sociological (Zaimina, 2025), and policy perspectives (Syatar, Imran, et al., 2023), while limited attention has been given to its governance dimension within the framework of Islamic legal and political thought. In this regard, *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* offers an important analytical perspective for understanding how religious moderation is formulated, implemented, and institutionalized as a form of public governance oriented toward public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*).

Classical Muslim scholars such as al-Māwardī, Ibn Taymiyyah, and al-Shāṭibī conceptualized governance as a mechanism for realizing justice (*al-‘adālah*), protecting religion and society, preserving public order, and achieving collective welfare in accordance with the objectives of Sharī‘ah (*maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*) (Al-Māwardī, 1996; Al-Shāṭibī, 2004; Amin et al., 2024; Taymiyyah, 2004). Within this framework, *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* is not merely concerned with political authority but also with the formulation of public policies capable of safeguarding social cohesion (*ḥifẓ al-ummah*), preventing social conflict, and promoting the common good. Consequently, religious moderation may be understood as a contemporary manifestation of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* because it seeks to establish harmonious relations among diverse religious communities while preventing extremism and social fragmentation (Al-Jawziyyah, 1899).

Pesantren, as indigenous Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, occupy a strategic position in transmitting moderate Islamic values rooted in the tradition of *Ahlussunnah wa al-Jama‘ah*. The principles of *tawassuṭ*, *tasāmuḥ*, *tawāzun*, and *ī’tidāl* have historically shaped *pesantren* traditions and contributed to the development of inclusive Islamic practices within Indonesian society. Previous studies show that *pesantren* actively

internalize moderation values through religious learning, institutional culture, and the charismatic leadership of *kiai* (Ahmadi et al., 2024; Ma’arif et al., 2025). Likewise, Islamic higher education institutions have increasingly mainstreamed religious moderation through curriculum development, institutional policies, and academic programs (Ainissyifa & Nasrulloh, 2025; Fauzi et al., 2025).

The rapid expansion of digital technology has further transformed the landscape of religious moderation. Adeni dan Hasanah (2023) demonstrate how Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah have utilized digital platforms to disseminate moderation narratives and counter extremist ideologies. Nevertheless, digital media also facilitate the spread of radical and intolerant religious narratives, particularly among younger generations (Febriani & Ritonga, 2022). Hadiyanto et al. (2025) further argue that social media platforms have become influential arenas for constructing contemporary interpretations of religious moderation. These developments create new challenges for *pesantren* in maintaining their moderate traditions amid the expansion of transnational religious ideologies and digital religious authority.

Despite the growing body of literature on religious moderation, existing studies predominantly focus on educational implementation, leadership strategies, digital discourse, curriculum development, and sociological dimensions of moderation (Muliadi et al., 2025; Musyahid & Kolis, 2023). While these studies provide valuable insights, they offer limited explanation of how religious moderation operates as a governance mechanism within the framework of Islamic legal and political thought. More importantly, few studies have examined the interaction between state religious policy, *pesantren* authority, and public welfare objectives through the analytical lens of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*.

Furthermore, existing scholarship rarely explores how *pesantren* negotiate state-sponsored moderation policies while simultaneously preserving their traditional religious authority, institutional autonomy, and socio-cultural legitimacy. As a result, the relationship between state regulation, *pesantren* governance, and the realization of *maṣlaḥah* remains insufficiently theorized in contemporary studies of religious moderation. This gap is particularly significant because *pesantren* function not only as educational institutions but also as socio-religious actors that mediate between state policy, religious authority, and community interests.

This study therefore seeks to develop a *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*-based model of religious moderation governance by examining the interaction between state policy, *pesantren* authority, and socio-religious practices in Kediri. Unlike previous studies, which primarily emphasize educational or sociological dimensions, this research focuses on the governance dimension of religious moderation through a socio-legal approach.

Based on this background, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How is the policy of religious moderation implemented in *pesantren* in Kediri? (2) How do *pesantren* transmit *wasatīyyah* values through their socio-religious traditions? and (3) How can the implementation of religious moderation be analyzed through the perspective of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*?

This study contributes to the literature in three important ways. First, it operationalizes *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* as an analytical framework for examining religious moderation beyond its normative formulation. Second, it proposes a conceptual model linking state policy, *pesantren* institutions, and public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) within the governance of religious moderation. Third, it enriches contemporary discussions on Islamic legal studies and comparative *madhhab* scholarship by demonstrating how classical principles of Islamic governance are adapted within modern Indonesian religious institutions.

Accordingly, this study argues that religious moderation in Indonesia should be understood not merely as a state program or educational agenda but as a form of collaborative governance rooted in *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, aimed at realizing public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), social justice (*al-‘adālah*), social cohesion (*ḥifẓ al-ummah*), and the prevention of religious extremism within a multicultural nation-state.

Methods

This study employed a socio-legal research method with a qualitative empirical approach. The socio-legal approach was utilized to examine the interaction between state policies on religious moderation and socio-religious practices within *pesantren* communities. In this framework, law is understood not merely as a normative text but also as a social phenomenon that is interpreted, negotiated, and institutionalized within religious communities (Arsyad et al., 2025). Unlike conventional socio-legal studies that primarily focus on the implementation of legal norms, this study integrates the analytical perspective of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* to investigate how religious moderation is governed, legitimized, and institutionalized through the interaction between state regulation, *pesantren* authority, and public welfare objectives (Kamali, 2008).

The analytical framework of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* was employed because this study seeks to understand religious moderation not only as a public policy agenda but also as a form of Islamic governance oriented toward the realization of public welfare and social harmony. In classical Islamic political and legal thought, governance is expected to achieve the objectives of the *Sharī‘ah* through the promotion of justice, protection of social order, and preservation of communal unity (Al-Māwardī, 1996; Al-Shāṭibī, 2004; Taymiyyah, 2004). Therefore, *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* provides an appropriate analytical framework for

examining how state policies on religious moderation are interpreted, negotiated, and implemented within contemporary Islamic educational institutions.

Operationally, *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* was applied through four analytical dimensions derived from classical and contemporary Islamic legal-political thought. First, *maṣlaḥah* (public welfare) was used to assess the extent to which religious moderation contributes to social harmony, collective benefit, and the public interest. Second, *al-‘adālah* (justice) was employed to analyze inclusiveness, fairness, and equal treatment toward religious diversity. Third, *ḥifẓ al-ummah* (preservation of social cohesion) was utilized to examine efforts aimed at maintaining communal unity and preventing religious conflict. Fourth, *tadbīr al-shu‘ūn al-‘āmmah* (public governance) was used to evaluate institutional mechanisms through which religious moderation policies are formulated, implemented, and managed. These analytical dimensions were derived from the political and legal thought of al-Māwardī (1996), Ibn Taymiyyah (2004), and al-Shāṭibī (2004), as well as contemporary discussions on Islamic governance and *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* (Auda, 2008; Kamali, 2008).

The research was conducted at three *pesantren* in Kediri, East Java, namely Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo Kediri, Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Sumbersari, and Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo Al-Munadhdhoroh. These institutions were selected purposively because they represent influential Islamic educational institutions rooted in the tradition of *Ahlussunnah wa al-Jama‘ah* and actively engage in the transmission of moderate Islamic values. The selected *pesantren* also demonstrate significant social influence and maintain active engagement with government programs related to religious moderation and Islamic education, making them relevant sites for examining the governance dimension of religious moderation from the perspective of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to examine educational activities, socio-religious interactions, leadership practices, and institutional programs related to religious moderation. In-depth interviews involved *kiai*, *ustaz*, students (*santri*), and policymakers associated with religious moderation initiatives. The interview participants were selected purposively based on their involvement in educational activities, institutional management, and policy implementation related to religious moderation. Documentation included legal regulations, *pesantren* curricula, institutional reports, government publications, religious moderation guidelines, and relevant academic literature. The legal documents analyzed included the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning *Pesantren*, and Presidential Regulation Number 58 of 2023 concerning the Strengthening of Religious Moderation.

To ensure consistency between the theoretical framework and empirical investigation, interview protocols and observation guidelines were structured around the four analytical dimensions of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*. Informants were asked about their understanding of religious moderation, perceptions of state moderation policies, institutional strategies for promoting moderation, efforts to maintain social harmony, mechanisms for preventing extremism, and the role of *pesantren* in advancing public welfare and social cohesion. This procedure enabled the operationalization of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* as an analytical tool rather than merely a normative concept (Azqia et al., 2025; Kirin & Ismail, 2025).

The collected data were analyzed through several stages, namely data reduction, coding, categorization, interpretation, and verification. The analysis employed thematic coding techniques, whereby empirical findings were systematically classified according to the four dimensions of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*: *maṣlaḥah*, *al-‘adālah*, *ḥifẓ al-ummah*, and *tadbīr al-shu‘ūn al-‘āmmah*. The coded data were then interpreted to identify patterns of interaction between state policies, *pesantren* authority, and socio-religious practices.

The analytical process consisted of three interconnected levels. First, descriptive analysis was conducted to identify the forms and practices of religious moderation within *pesantren*. Second, socio-legal analysis was employed to examine the relationship between legal regulations and institutional practices. Third, *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* analysis was applied to evaluate how moderation practices contribute to the realization of *maṣlaḥah*, *al-‘adālah*, *ḥifẓ al-ummah*, and effective public governance (Auda, 2008; Kamali, 2015). Through this multi-layered analytical process, the study developed a conceptual understanding of religious moderation governance that connects state policy, *pesantren* institutions, and public welfare objectives within contemporary Indonesian Muslim society.

To ensure data validity and reliability, this study employed triangulation techniques by comparing interview findings, observational data, and documentary sources. Source triangulation was conducted among *kiai*, *ustaz*, *santri*, and policymakers, while document triangulation was undertaken by comparing empirical findings with legal regulations, institutional documents, and academic literature. In addition, member checking was conducted with selected informants to verify the accuracy and credibility of the researchers’ interpretations (Absori et al., 2026).

This study positions *pesantren* not merely as educational institutions but as socio-religious governance actors that mediate between state policy, Islamic legal traditions, and community interests. Consequently, the integration of socio-legal inquiry and *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* analysis provides a comprehensive framework for understanding religious moderation as a form of collaborative governance aimed at realizing *maṣlaḥah* (public

welfare), *al-‘adālah* (justice), and *ḥifẓ al-ummah* (social cohesion) within a multicultural nation-state (Zamroni et al., 2025).

Result and Discussion

Religious Moderation as Islamic Legal Politics in Indonesia

The findings reveal that religious moderation in Indonesia functions not merely as a socio-religious discourse but also as a form of Islamic legal politics institutionalized through state policies and public religious governance. The strengthening of religious moderation promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs reflects the state's effort to preserve social harmony, national integration, and religious stability within Indonesia's multicultural society. This orientation is legally reinforced through several regulatory instruments, including the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Pesantren, and Presidential Regulation Number 58 of 2023 concerning the Strengthening of Religious Moderation. In this regard, religious moderation has increasingly become part of the national legal-political framework in responding to the challenges of intolerance, extremism, and socio-religious polarization (Fauzan, 2023; Muhlisin et al., 2023).

From the perspective of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, religious moderation may be understood as a governance mechanism through which the state seeks to realize *maṣlaḥah* (public welfare), ensure *al-‘adālah* (social justice), preserve *ḥifẓ al-ummah* (social cohesion), and manage religious diversity through effective public governance (*tadbīr al-shu‘ūn al-‘āmmah*). Rather than functioning solely as a policy instrument, religious moderation represents a contemporary manifestation of Islamic legal politics in which state authority and religious institutions collaboratively pursue the objectives of the *Sharī‘ah* (*maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*) within a pluralistic nation-state.

This finding confirms the classical conception of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* developed by al-Māwardī (1996), Ibn Taymiyyah (2004), and al-Shāṭibī (2004), who emphasize that public authority should be directed toward the protection of religion, preservation of social order, realization of justice, and achievement of collective welfare. Consequently, religious moderation in Indonesia should not be viewed merely as an administrative program but as an institutional effort to harmonize constitutional governance, Islamic values, and multicultural social realities.

The empirical findings demonstrate that pesantren communities interpret religious moderation not as state intervention into religious life but rather as a continuation of moderate Islamic traditions historically practiced within pesantren environments. KH. Athoillah Sholahuddin Anwar of Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo explained that moderation has long existed within pesantren traditions through the principles of *tawassuṭ* and *tasāmuḥ*.

He stated, “Religious moderation is not a new concept in *pesantren* because *pesantren* have long taught the middle path, respect for differences, and the preservation of Islamic brotherhood within society” (Interview, 14 September 2025).

Analytically, this finding demonstrates that the implementation of religious moderation in *pesantren* derives not primarily from state intervention but from the internal normative tradition of *Ahlussunnah wa al-Jama‘ah*. Within the framework of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, these traditions function as social mechanisms for preserving *ḥifẓ al-ummah* by cultivating communal harmony, preventing sectarian conflict, and maintaining social stability. Thus, state policies on moderation gain legitimacy because they resonate with values already embedded within *pesantren* traditions.

The findings further reveal that the implementation of religious moderation in *pesantren* is strongly influenced by the exemplary leadership of *kiai* as the central authority in *pesantren* traditions. KH. Ahmad Hasan Syukri Zamzami Mahrus emphasized that the internalization of moderation values depends largely on moral example and daily interaction between *kiai* and *santri*. According to him, “The exemplary conduct of a *kiai* is more effective than theoretical instruction because students learn moderation from how the *kiai* responds to differences and social issues in everyday life” (Interview, 18 September 2025).

From the perspective of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, the role of the *kiai* reflects an important dimension of religious governance. The authority of the *kiai* functions not merely as educational leadership but also as a mechanism for realizing *al-‘adālah* through ethical guidance, conflict mediation, and the cultivation of inclusive religious attitudes. This finding indicates that religious moderation in *pesantren* is sustained through moral authority rather than coercive regulation, thereby strengthening its social legitimacy.

In Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo and Madrasah Hidayatul Mubtadi‘ien (MHM), the strengthening of moderation values is integrated into the learning of *fiqh*, ethics, and *baḥth al-masā’il*. Ust. M. Rifai Bachrun explained that moderation is embedded within the *pesantren* curriculum through discussions emphasizing balanced religious understanding and contextual legal reasoning. Similarly, Ust. Qodhi Al Iyadl stated that *baḥth al-masā’il* functions as an important forum for cultivating dialogical attitudes and collective problem-solving among *santri*.

These findings indicate that moderation is institutionalized through intellectual mechanisms that encourage deliberation, recognition of legal diversity, and contextual interpretation of Islamic law. Within the framework of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, such practices contribute to the realization of *maṣlaḥah* because they enable religious decisions to respond to social realities while maintaining fidelity to Islamic legal principles. The tradition

of *baḥṡh al-masā’il* also reflects participatory governance in which collective reasoning becomes an instrument for addressing contemporary social issues.

At Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Sumber Sari, the implementation of religious moderation tends to emphasize cultural and social approaches. Daily communal life, social interaction, and respect for diversity are regarded as important instruments for cultivating moderation. However, several informants acknowledged that moderation curricula remain insufficiently systematic and often depend on the initiative of individual educators.

This condition demonstrates that moderation governance in Darussalam Sumber Sari operates primarily through informal social institutions rather than formal policy structures. While such an approach effectively strengthens social cohesion (*ḥifẓ al-ummah*), the absence of systematic institutionalization may limit the long-term sustainability and replicability of moderation programs (Azizi et al., 2025; Idrus et al., 2022). This finding suggests the need for stronger integration between cultural practices and institutional governance frameworks.

Meanwhile, Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo Al-Munadhdhoroh demonstrates a more institutional and integrative model of religious moderation. The findings show that moderation values are incorporated into formal curricula, student activities, and character-building programs. KH. Agus Abdul Majid Ali Fikri emphasized that moderation is closely connected to the values of Wahidiyah spirituality and national commitment.

Compared with the other two *pesantren*, Kedunglo demonstrates a more comprehensive governance model because moderation is institutionalized through educational structures, organizational programs, and value-based leadership. This model illustrates the practical application of *tadbīr al-shu’ūn al-‘āmmah*, whereby moderation is systematically managed through formal and informal institutional mechanisms.

Nevertheless, the study also found significant contemporary challenges related to digital media and the dissemination of extremist narratives among younger generations. Social media increasingly influences students’ religious understanding and occasionally introduces intolerant perspectives that conflict with *pesantren* traditions.

From the perspective of *Siyāṣah Shar‘iyyah*, the emergence of digital religious authority represents a new governance challenge because the preservation of *maṣlaḥah* and *ḥifẓ al-ummah* can no longer rely solely on conventional educational institutions (Fathorrahman et al., 2024). The findings indicate that effective moderation governance requires adaptive strategies capable of integrating traditional Islamic authority with digital literacy, critical thinking, and responsible engagement with online religious content.

Overall, the findings reveal a governance pattern in which the state provides regulatory legitimacy, *pesantren* provide religious authority, and local communities provide social legitimacy. This interaction forms a collaborative governance model of

religious moderation that connects state policy, *pesantren* institutions, and the realization of *maṣlaḥah*. Theoretically, this model demonstrates that religious moderation in Indonesia functions not merely as a policy agenda but as a contemporary manifestation of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* aimed at realizing justice, social cohesion, public welfare, and sustainable religious coexistence.

The Transmission of Wasathiyah Values in Pesantren Traditions

The findings indicate that the three *pesantren* studied—Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo Kediri, Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Sumbersari, and Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo Al-Munadhdhoroh—actively transmit *wasathiyah* values through religious learning, institutional culture, and socio-religious interaction. The principles of *tawassuṭ* (moderation), *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance), *tawāzun* (balance), and *ī‘tidāl* (justice) are deeply embedded within *pesantren* traditions and shape the religious attitudes of *santri* (Rivauzi et al., 2025). These values are not merely taught normatively but are practiced through daily communal life, educational interaction, and socio-religious engagement within *pesantren* communities. This finding confirms previous studies emphasizing that *pesantren* function as important institutions in preserving moderate Islamic traditions in Indonesia (Ahmadi et al., 2024; Muqowim et al., 2022).

From the perspective of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, the transmission of *wasathiyah* values represents an important mechanism for preserving social cohesion (*ḥifẓ al-ummah*) and promoting public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*). Rather than functioning solely as religious instruction, the transmission process serves as a form of socio-religious governance through which *pesantren* cultivate inclusive religious attitudes, prevent extremism, and strengthen peaceful coexistence within society. This finding suggests that *wasathiyah* operates not only as an ethical principle but also as a governance instrument contributing to the broader objectives of Islamic public order and social harmony (Liu et al., 2025; Mala & Hunaida, 2023; Muqowim et al., 2022; Thohir et al., 2026).

One important finding concerns the central role of *kiai* in transmitting and strengthening moderation values among *santri*. The charismatic authority of *pesantren* leaders significantly influences the internalization of moderate Islamic attitudes through religious instruction, moral example, and daily interaction. KH. Ahmad Hasan Syukri Zamzami Mahrus explained that moderation cannot be separated from the ethical behavior of *pesantren* leaders themselves. He stated, “Students learn moderation not only from religious texts but also from the attitudes demonstrated by their teachers and *kiai* in responding to differences within society” (Interview, 18 September 2025). Similarly, KH. Athoillah Sholahuddin Anwar emphasized that *pesantren* traditions have historically taught Muslims to maintain balance, avoid extremism, and prioritize social harmony.

According to him, “Pesantren traditions teach students to uphold moderation, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence as part of Islamic ethics” (Interview, 14 September 2025). These findings support Ma’arif et al. (2025), who argue that *kiai* leadership constitutes an essential factor in institutionalizing religious moderation within pesantren communities.

Analytically, the findings demonstrate that the authority of the *kiai* functions as a form of moral governance that shapes the religious orientation of *santri* through persuasion, ethical example, and cultural legitimacy rather than coercion. Within the framework of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, this pattern reflects the realization of *al-‘adālah* and *maṣlaḥah* through educational leadership capable of mediating differences, fostering tolerance, and strengthening social trust. Consequently, the success of moderation transmission depends not merely on institutional regulations but also on the moral credibility and social legitimacy of religious leaders (Ahmadi et al., 2024; Arifin et al., 2025; Ma’arif et al., 2025).

The study also found that the transmission of *wasatīyyah* values is closely connected to intellectual traditions within pesantren, particularly through the study of classical Islamic texts and *baḥth al-masā’il*. At Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo, religious learning emphasizes contextual legal reasoning, tolerance toward differences of opinion, and collective deliberation in solving contemporary issues. Ust. M. Rifai Bachrun explained, “The teaching of *fiqh* in pesantren emphasizes not only legal certainty but also social welfare, tolerance, and the importance of respecting diverse scholarly opinions” (Interview, 22 September 2025). Likewise, Ust. Qodhi Al Iyadl stated that *baḥth al-masā’il* functions as an educational forum encouraging dialogue, critical thinking, and moderate legal reasoning among *santri*. He remarked, “Through *baḥth al-masā’il*, students are trained to discuss problems collectively and search for balanced Islamic solutions based on scholarly traditions” (Interview, 5 October 2025).

These findings indicate that the transmission of *wasatīyyah* is deeply embedded within the intellectual culture of pesantren. The tradition of *baḥth al-masā’il* institutionalizes deliberation, recognition of legal plurality, and contextual reasoning, thereby preventing rigid and absolutist interpretations of Islamic law. From the perspective of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, such intellectual practices contribute to the realization of *maṣlaḥah* because legal reasoning is directed toward solving social problems and maintaining communal harmony rather than merely producing formal legal judgments (Al Ghifari et al., 2025; Muqowim et al., 2022; Thohir et al., 2026).

In Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Sumber Sari, the transmission of moderation values tends to occur through cultural interaction and communal social practices. The pesantren environment emphasizes togetherness, mutual respect, and social inclusivity in

daily life. Ust. Naufal explained that moderation develops naturally within *pesantren* communities through direct social interaction among *santri* from different social and regional backgrounds. He stated, “Students learn tolerance through communal living, respecting differences, and maintaining harmonious relationships within *pesantren* life” (Interview, 14 September 2025). In addition, Ust. Asmaul Husna emphasized that moderation is strengthened through social ethics and interpersonal interaction rather than through formal doctrinal instruction alone. According to her, “Tolerance is built through everyday interaction, cooperation, and mutual respect among students within the *pesantren* environment” (Interview, 18 September 2025).

This finding demonstrates that moderation transmission in Darussalam Summersari is primarily relational and socio-cultural in nature. The cultivation of tolerance occurs through shared experiences, collective activities, and everyday interaction, thereby transforming moderation from an abstract concept into a lived social practice. Such a model strengthens *hifẓ al-ummah* by fostering mutual trust, social solidarity, and peaceful coexistence among diverse members of the *pesantren* community (Ahmadi et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2025; Mala & Hunaida, 2023).

Another important finding concerns the role of educators in shaping moderate religious attitudes among *santri*. At Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Summersari, several informants emphasized that the success of moderation depends heavily on teachers’ ability to integrate moderation values into learning processes and social interaction. Ust. Alaika Sani explained, “Teachers play an important role in guiding students toward moderate religious understanding because students often imitate the attitudes and perspectives of their educators” (Interview, 22 September 2025). Similarly, Anshari, a *santri* at the *pesantren*, stated that strengthening moderation requires more systematic teacher training programs. He remarked, “Moderation education will be more effective if teachers receive continuous training on tolerance, dialogue, and inclusive Islamic perspectives” (Interview, 5 October 2025).

The findings suggest that educators function as strategic agents in the governance of religious moderation. Their pedagogical capacity determines the effectiveness of moderation transmission and the sustainability of inclusive religious values. Therefore, the institutionalization of *wasatīyyah* requires not only supportive organizational culture but also continuous investment in teacher development, particularly in the areas of dialogue, conflict resolution, and inclusive Islamic perspectives (Daheri, 2022; Saefullah et al., 2025; Sahin, 2018; Setiawan et al., 2026).

At Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo Al-Munadhdhoroh, the transmission of *wasatīyyah* values demonstrates a more institutional and integrative pattern. The *pesantren* integrates moderation values into formal curricula, student activities, and character-building

programs within educational institutions such as SMA Wahidiyah Kedunglo. Ibu Suasih, M.Pd explained that moderation education has been incorporated into classroom learning and extracurricular activities to strengthen students' social awareness and national commitment. She stated, "Moderation values are integrated into formal education through character-building programs, tolerance education, and collaborative student activities" (Interview, 1 October 2025). Likewise, Ibu Luluk Mufidah emphasized that student development programs are designed to cultivate discipline, social empathy, and peaceful interaction among students.

Compared with the other two *pesantren*, Kedunglo demonstrates a more formalized model of moderation transmission. The integration of *wasatīyyah* values into curricula, student organizations, and character-building programs indicates a transition from cultural transmission toward institutional governance. This model reflects the principle of *tadbīr al-shu'ūn al-āmmah*, whereby moderation is systematically managed through educational planning, organizational structures, and long-term institutional strategies (Ainissyifa & Nasrulloh, 2025; Fauzi et al., 2025; Muliadi et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, the study also identified several challenges in transmitting moderation values within *pesantren* communities, particularly in relation to digital transformation and social media influence. Ust. Abdul Karim of Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo explained that digital media increasingly affects students' religious understanding and sometimes exposes them to intolerant narratives inconsistent with *pesantren* traditions. He stated, "Social media has become a serious challenge because students are exposed to various online religious interpretations, including extreme and intolerant perspectives" (Interview, 28 September 2025). Similarly, Khoirul Warouw from Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo noted that digital literacy among students remains limited despite the rapid circulation of online religious content (Interview, 30 October 2025).

From the perspective of *Siyāṣah Shar'īyyah*, digital transformation introduces a new challenge to the preservation of *maṣṣalāḥah* and *ḥifẓ al-ummah* because religious authority is no longer monopolized by traditional institutions. The rapid circulation of online religious narratives requires *pesantren* to develop adaptive governance strategies that integrate digital literacy, critical engagement with social media, and responsible religious communication (Latif et al., 2025; Syatar, Bakry, et al., 2023). Without such adaptation, the transmission of *wasatīyyah* values may become increasingly vulnerable to ideological fragmentation and digital radicalization (Adeni & Hasanah, 2023; Febriani & Ritonga, 2022; Hadiyanto et al., 2025; Mahmudah et al., 2025).

Overall, the findings reveal three interrelated mechanisms for transmitting *wasatīyyah* values within *pesantren*: moral transmission through *kiai* leadership, intellectual transmission through Islamic scholarship and *baḥṭh al-masā'il*, and institutional

transmission through educational governance and organizational programs. Together, these mechanisms form a comprehensive model of *wasatīyyah* transmission that contributes to the realization of *maṣlaḥah*, *al-‘adālah*, and *ḥifẓ al-ummah*. This model demonstrates that the sustainability of religious moderation depends not only on doctrinal instruction but also on the integration of leadership, intellectual culture, and institutional governance within *pesantren* traditions (Ahmadi et al., 2024; Ma’arif et al., 2025; Muqowim et al., 2022; Thohir et al., 2026).

Digital Challenges and the Contestation of Religious Authority

Despite the strong tradition of moderation within *pesantren*, this study found several significant challenges related to the institutionalization of religious moderation in the digital era. One of the most pressing issues concerns the rapid spread of extremist religious narratives through social media and digital platforms (Aldera et al., 2021; Rohid et al., 2025). The expansion of online religious content has transformed the pattern of religious learning among younger Muslim generations, including *santri* in *pesantren* communities. Informants explained that students today increasingly access religious knowledge through digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and online religious forums, which often present diverse and sometimes contradictory religious interpretations. This condition has created new challenges for *pesantren* in preserving traditional moderate Islamic authority rooted in *Ahlussunnah wa al-Jama‘ah* traditions (Adeni & Hasanah, 2023; Hadiyanto et al., 2025).

From the perspective of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, the digitalization of religious knowledge has fundamentally transformed the governance of religious authority. Whereas religious learning in traditional *pesantren* was historically mediated through recognized scholars and established chains of transmission (*sanad*), digital platforms have enabled the emergence of decentralized religious authorities that operate beyond institutional supervision. This transformation creates both opportunities and risks for the realization of *maṣlaḥah* because access to religious knowledge becomes more open while simultaneously increasing exposure to misinformation, intolerance, and extremist narratives (Adeni & Hasanah, 2023; Fuadi et al., 2021; Hadiyanto et al., 2025).

The findings reveal that the authority of *kiai* and traditional *pesantren* scholarship is currently facing competition from alternative digital religious authorities. Previously, religious authority in *pesantren* was strongly centered on direct interaction between *santri* and *kiai*, supported by the study of classical Islamic texts and communal religious traditions. However, digital media has enabled external religious actors to influence students’ religious understanding without institutional filtering. Ust. Abdul Karim from Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo explained that social media significantly affects the religious

perspectives of younger *santri*. He stated, “Today many students receive religious information directly from social media, and sometimes the content they consume promotes intolerance and rigid interpretations that differ from *pesantren* traditions” (Interview, 28 September 2025). This finding confirms Adeni and Hasanah's (2023) argument that digital media has become an important arena for contesting religious moderation discourse in contemporary Indonesia.

Analytically, the findings indicate that contemporary religious authority is no longer monopolized by traditional institutions but increasingly shaped by algorithmic visibility, digital popularity, and online engagement. This shift has weakened conventional mechanisms for validating religious knowledge and created a competitive environment in which moderate and extremist interpretations coexist within the same digital ecosystem. Within the framework of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, such conditions present a challenge to the preservation of *ḥifẓ al-ummah* because religious fragmentation may undermine social cohesion and communal stability (Febriani & Ritonga, 2022; Hadiyanto et al., 2025).

Another important finding concerns the limited digital literacy among some *santri* in evaluating online religious information critically. Several informants emphasized that many students still lack the analytical capacity to distinguish credible Islamic scholarship from provocative or extremist online content. Khoirul Warouw from Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo Al-Munadhdhoroh noted that the rapid circulation of digital religious narratives often influences students emotionally rather than intellectually. According to him, “The challenge today is not only access to information but also the ability of students to critically evaluate religious content circulating on social media” (Interview, 30 October 2025). Similarly, Ust. Muchilisin from Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo argued that *pesantren* need to strengthen digital literacy programs as part of contemporary moderation education. He stated, “Pesantren should not reject digital technology, but students must be guided so they can use digital media wisely and critically” (Interview, 2 October 2025). These findings support Febriani and Ritonga (2022), who argue that social media significantly shapes younger generations’ perceptions of religion, moderation, and religious authority.

The findings suggest that digital literacy has become an essential component of religious moderation governance. In contemporary Muslim societies, the ability to critically assess online religious content is closely related to the realization of *maṣlaḥah* because informed and critical religious engagement reduces vulnerability to radicalization and ideological manipulation. Therefore, moderation education must move beyond conventional religious instruction and incorporate digital competence, media literacy, and critical reasoning as integral dimensions of religious learning (Fauzi et al., 2025; Febriani & Ritonga, 2022).

The study also found that extremist narratives circulating in digital spaces frequently promote exclusivist interpretations of Islam that conflict with *pesantren* traditions emphasizing tolerance, coexistence, and social harmony. Several informants explained that some online preachers and transnational Islamic movements disseminate rigid religious interpretations rejecting local traditions and pluralistic social values. Ust. Syifa from Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo emphasized that *pesantren* continue to promote anti-violence education and tolerance to counter such narratives. She explained, “Students must understand that Islam teaches peace, justice, and respect for humanity, not hatred or violence toward others” (Interview, 15 October 2025).

This finding demonstrates that *pesantren* continue to function as important guardians of moderate Islamic traditions in the midst of increasing digital radicalization. Through educational activities, moral guidance, and community engagement, *pesantren* contribute to safeguarding *ḥifẓ al-ummah* by promoting social cohesion, preventing ideological extremism, and strengthening peaceful religious coexistence (Ahmadi et al., 2024; Muqowim et al., 2022).

In addition to digital challenges, the study identified resistance toward moderation discourse among certain groups who perceive moderation as political or ideological intervention into religious life. Some individuals associate moderation policies with efforts to weaken Islamic identity or limit religious expression. Mahmudah et al. (2025) explain that resistance toward moderation policies often emerges from exclusivist religious understandings and socio-political distrust toward state institutions. However, the *pesantren* studied generally reject such assumptions and instead interpret moderation as fully consistent with Islamic teachings concerning justice, balance, and peaceful coexistence. KH. Agus Abdul Majid Ali Fikri from Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo explained, “Religious moderation does not mean weakening Islamic teachings, but rather strengthening Islam as a source of mercy, unity, and social harmony within society” (Interview, 5 October 2025).

From the perspective of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, this resistance reflects the ongoing negotiation between religious authority, state policy, and public perception (Sutrisno et al., 2025). The findings indicate that moderation policies are more likely to gain legitimacy when they are interpreted through indigenous Islamic concepts such as *wasāṭiyyah*, *maṣlaḥah*, and *al-‘adālah* rather than being perceived solely as state-driven programs. Consequently, the success of moderation governance depends not only on regulatory frameworks but also on the ability of religious institutions to contextualize moderation within authentic Islamic intellectual traditions (Arif, 2021; Hamzah, 2022; Thohir et al., 2026).

The findings further indicate that *pesantren* communities have attempted to respond adaptively to contemporary digital challenges by integrating moderation values into educational activities, student organizations, and social interaction. At Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo, moderation values have been incorporated into student character-building programs and extracurricular activities designed to strengthen tolerance and social responsibility. Ibu Luluk Mufidah explained, “Character education and student development programs are important instruments for strengthening moderation and preventing the spread of intolerance among young people” (Interview, 1 November 2025). Likewise, at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Summersari, communal interaction and social ethics continue to function as important mechanisms for cultivating moderation values among *santri* despite the increasing influence of digital culture.

These adaptive responses illustrate the practical implementation of *tadbīr al-shu’ūn al-‘āmmah* within *pesantren* governance. Rather than rejecting technological change, the *pesantren* studied seek to integrate digital adaptation with the preservation of traditional Islamic values. This approach demonstrates that effective moderation governance requires institutional flexibility, educational innovation, and sustained engagement with emerging social realities (Fauzi et al., 2025; Muliadi et al., 2025).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the contestation of religious authority in the digital era has transformed the dynamics of moderation within *pesantren* communities. The challenge faced by *pesantren* today is not merely preserving traditional Islamic scholarship but also developing adaptive governance strategies capable of responding to digital transformation and the spread of online extremism. Theoretically, this study identifies a digital moderation governance model consisting of three interconnected dimensions: the preservation of traditional religious authority, the strengthening of digital literacy, and the institutional adaptation of moderation programs. Together, these dimensions contribute to the realization of *maṣlaḥah*, *ḥifẓ al-ummah*, and *al-‘adālah* in contemporary Muslim society. Therefore, strengthening religious moderation requires not only normative legal policies but also collaborative engagement among *pesantren*, educational institutions, civil society, digital platforms, and the state.

Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah and the Future of Religious Moderation

From the perspective of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, the implementation of religious moderation reflects collaborative efforts between the state and Islamic institutions to realize public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), preserve social unity (*ḥifẓ al-ummah*), and prevent religious extremism within a multicultural society. In Islamic political thought, governmental authority is fundamentally directed toward maintaining justice (*al-‘adālah*), social harmony, and the protection of religious life. Therefore, religious moderation in

Indonesia can be understood not merely as a contemporary state program but also as part of Islamic governance aimed at safeguarding social stability and strengthening peaceful coexistence among diverse religious communities. This perspective aligns with Hamzah (2022), who explains that moderation and coexistence constitute important principles within the historical tradition of Islamic governance reflected in the Medina Charter.

From an analytical perspective, the findings demonstrate that religious moderation functions as a governance mechanism that connects constitutional policies, Islamic educational institutions, and community-based social practices. In this context, *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* provides a conceptual framework through which state policies are assessed not solely based on legal legitimacy but also on their capacity to realize public welfare, social justice, and communal harmony. Consequently, religious moderation should be understood as an operational instrument of governance rather than merely a normative discourse of tolerance (Fauzan, 2023; Itmam & Aouich, 2024; Muhlisin et al., 2023).

The findings demonstrate that *pesantren* possess strategic potential in strengthening moderation through adaptive Islamic governance rooted in local Islamic traditions and the values of *Ahlussunnah wa al-Jama‘ah*. The integration between state policy and *pesantren* traditions has contributed to the development of inclusive and tolerant Islamic practices in Indonesian Muslim society. KH. Athoillah Sholahuddin Anwar emphasized that *pesantren* historically function not only as educational institutions but also as moral guardians of social harmony. He stated, “Pesantren have long taught Islam as a religion of balance, peace, and social responsibility, which is why moderation is naturally embedded within *pesantren* traditions” (Interview, 14 September 2025).

This finding indicates that *pesantren* serve as intermediary institutions linking governmental objectives with community religious life. Within the framework of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, such a role reflects the principle of *tadbīr al-shu‘ūn al-‘āmmah* (public affairs governance), whereby social institutions participate in realizing collective welfare and maintaining social order. Thus, the future of religious moderation depends not only on state regulations but also on the capacity of *pesantren* to function as socio-religious actors that translate public policies into locally accepted religious practices.

The study also reveals that the institutionalization of moderation in *pesantren* increasingly requires adaptive educational and governance strategies capable of responding to contemporary socio-religious challenges. At Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo Al-Munadhdhoroh, moderation values have been integrated into formal education systems, student organizations, and character-building programs. KH. Agus Abdul Majid Ali Fikri explained that moderation should be connected to both Islamic spirituality and national commitment. According to him, “Religious moderation should strengthen both Islamic values and national unity so that religion becomes a source of social cohesion

rather than conflict” ([Interview, 5 October 2025](#)). Likewise, Ibu Luluk Mufidah emphasized that student development programs are essential for strengthening tolerance, discipline, and peaceful interaction among students. She noted, “Character-building activities and student guidance programs are important instruments for cultivating moderation and preventing intolerance among younger generations” ([Interview, 1 November 2025](#)).

These findings suggest a gradual transition from cultural moderation toward institutional moderation. While moderation was traditionally transmitted through informal socialization ([Akhmar et al., 2023](#)), contemporary *pesantren* increasingly incorporate moderation into governance structures ([Burga & Damopolii, 2022](#); [Lutfi et al., 2026](#); [Suwendi et al., 2024](#)), educational curricula, organizational management, and character-development programs ([Sofi et al., 2025](#)). This transformation strengthens the sustainability of moderation values and enhances their capacity to address emerging social challenges ([Ainissyifa & Nasrulloh, 2025](#); [Fauzi et al., 2025](#); [Fitchett et al., 2024](#)).

Another important finding concerns the necessity of strengthening digital literacy and critical religious education within *pesantren* communities. The transformation of religious authority in the digital era has created new challenges related to the spread of intolerant and extremist narratives through social media platforms. Several informants explained that students today are highly exposed to online religious discourse that may contradict *pesantren* traditions emphasizing moderation and tolerance. Ust. Muchilisin from Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo stated, “Pesantren should adapt to digital transformation by strengthening students’ critical understanding of online religious information and promoting moderate Islamic perspectives in digital spaces” ([Interview, 2 October 2025](#)). Similarly, Khoirul Warouw from Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo noted that digital literacy has become increasingly important in protecting students from radical online influences ([Interview, 30 October 2025](#)). These findings support Adeni and Hasanah Adeni and Hasanah ([2023](#)) and Hadiyanto et al. ([2025](#)), who argue that digital media has become a strategic arena for contesting religious authority and moderation discourse in contemporary Muslim societies.

Within the perspective of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, strengthening digital literacy constitutes a contemporary form of safeguarding *maṣlaḥah* and protecting society from harmful ideological influences. The governance of religious moderation therefore extends beyond physical educational institutions and increasingly encompasses digital spaces where religious authority, identity, and discourse are continuously negotiated.

The findings further indicate that moderation in *pesantren* communities cannot rely solely on state legal policies but also requires active participation from religious institutions, educators, civil society, and local communities. In Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Sumber Sari, moderation values are cultivated through communal interaction,

social ethics, and cultural engagement within everyday *pesantren* life. Ust. Naufal explained, “Moderation becomes meaningful when students practice tolerance and social harmony directly in their daily interaction with others” ([Interview, 14 September 2025](#)).

This finding demonstrates that moderation governance is inherently collaborative. The effectiveness of moderation policies depends on the interaction among state institutions, religious leaders, educational actors, and local communities. Such collaboration strengthens social legitimacy and ensures that moderation is experienced not merely as a policy mandate but as a lived social practice embedded in everyday life ([Liu et al., 2025](#); [Muliadi et al., 2025](#)).

In addition, the study reveals that *pesantren* possess an important role as socio-religious mediators capable of negotiating Islamic traditions, national identity, and contemporary global challenges. Through the traditions of *bahtsul masā’il*, communal deliberation, and contextual Islamic scholarship, *pesantren* continue to develop adaptive responses toward social change while preserving moderate Islamic values. Ust. Qodhi Al Iyadl explained that *bahtsul masā’il* provides an important intellectual mechanism for discussing contemporary religious and social issues collectively. He remarked, “Pesantren traditions encourage dialogue and collective reasoning so that religious problems can be addressed wisely, moderately, and contextually” ([Interview, 5 October 2025](#)).

From the perspective of Islamic legal theory, *bahtsul masā’il* represents an operational manifestation of collective reasoning (*ijtihād jamā’ī*) that enables religious institutions to respond adaptively to changing social realities. This process strengthens the capacity of *pesantren* to produce contextual legal interpretations while preserving continuity with classical Islamic scholarship.

Based on the empirical findings, this study proposes a *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah-Based Religious Moderation Governance Model* consisting of three interconnected dimensions. First, the State Dimension, which provides legal legitimacy and policy direction through constitutional and regulatory frameworks. Second, the Pesantren Dimension, which functions as a mediator that translates moderation policies into educational, cultural, and religious practices. Third, the Public Welfare Dimension (*maṣlaḥah*), which serves as the ultimate objective of governance through the preservation of social harmony, national cohesion, and religious coexistence. The interaction among these three dimensions produces a sustainable moderation governance system capable of responding to both conventional and digital-era challenges.

Overall, this study argues that strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia requires sustainable collaboration between the state, *pesantren*, educational institutions, and civil society through adaptive and inclusive Islamic governance rooted in the principles of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic

legal and governance studies by demonstrating how *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah* can function as an analytical framework for understanding contemporary religious moderation policies. Practically, the proposed governance model offers an operational strategy for strengthening moderation through institutional integration, digital literacy, collaborative governance, and the promotion of *maṣlaḥah*-oriented public policies. Through this approach, religious moderation can function as a strategic framework for preserving social harmony, strengthening national resilience, and developing an inclusive Islamic civilization in contemporary Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that religious moderation in Indonesia should be understood not merely as a socio-religious discourse but as a contemporary form of Islamic governance institutionalized through state policies and public religious administration. From the perspective of *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, the institutionalization of religious moderation embodies the state's responsibility to realize *maṣlaḥah*, preserve social cohesion (*ḥifẓ al-ummah*), and prevent religious extremism within a pluralistic society. The legal foundations established through Law No. 18 of 2019 on Pesantren and Presidential Regulation No. 58 of 2023 indicate that religious moderation has become an integral component of Indonesia's Islamic legal-political framework.

The findings reveal that pesantren operationalize moderation through diverse yet complementary mechanisms rooted in *Ahlussunnah wa al-Jama‘ah* traditions, charismatic religious authority, deliberative practices, social engagement, and cultural accommodation. The study identifies three interconnected patterns of moderation governance—traditional-charismatic, cultural-interactional, and institutional-integrative—which illustrate that the internalization of moderation values occurs simultaneously through pedagogical, cultural, and organizational processes.

The principal theoretical contribution of this study lies in proposing a *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*-Based Religious Moderation Governance Model, consisting of the state dimension as the source of legal legitimacy and policy direction, the pesantren dimension as the arena of policy translation and implementation, and the *maṣlaḥah* dimension as the ultimate objective manifested in social harmony, religious coexistence, and national cohesion. This model extends contemporary discussions on Islamic governance by demonstrating how classical principles of Islamic political jurisprudence can be contextualized within modern nation-state institutions and educational settings.

Despite these contributions, the sustainability of religious moderation remains challenged by the expansion of digital religious authority, the dissemination of extremist narratives through online platforms, limited digital literacy, and ideological contestation

surrounding moderation discourse. These findings suggest that moderation policies should move beyond normative regulation toward adaptive governance strategies that integrate digital literacy, moderation-oriented curricula, institutional capacity building, and collaborative engagement among the state, pesantren, and civil society actors. Given the study’s limitation to three pesantren in Kediri and its qualitative socio-legal design, future research should undertake comparative investigations across different pesantren typologies, regions, and Islamic educational traditions. Further studies may also examine the nexus between religious moderation, digital religious authority, and online Islamic activism by employing comparative perspectives from *Siyāsah Shar‘iyyah*, *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, and various madhhab traditions to enrich scholarly understanding of moderation governance in contemporary Muslim societies.

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